

Fast Blast

California Student Aid Commission

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SPECIAL EDITION

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In support of the Commission's ongoing goal of providing California's financial aid community with proactive and current updates, we are providing this update on programs and projects. Please share this with any interested person who may not have received this newsletter.

PRESIDENT SIGNS BILL INCREASING AID TO STUDENTS

I am very excited today about the enactment of the College Cost Reduction Act of 2007 and what it will do for California's students bound for college, technical and vocational schools. The new law makes postsecondary education more affordable for more students with its increase in the amount of money a student can receive from Pell Grants.

I'm pleased President Bush decided to sign the legislation because it will make postsecondary education more affordable for students with the most need. This law not only increases the maximum Pell grant, it also provides tuition assistance to qualified students who commit to teaching in communities in high need areas.

Under the new law, Pell Grants will increase from \$4,310 a year to \$5,400 a year by 2012. The law also eliminates a tuition sensitivity provision in the Pell Grant program that previously prevented some community college students from receiving full financial aid. Students can use the extra cash provided under the new provisions to pay for non-tuition related expenses, such as room and board, books, parking and school supplies.

The new law also has several provisions that enhance student loan programs and, while there are benefits to student borrowing, grants are monies they don't have to pay back. The Commission is generally

supportive of any increase that will provide access for California's students, especially those from underserved populations.

COMMISSION MAKES DECISION ON Cal-SOAP FUNDING

The Student Aid Commission this week voted unanimously to support the staff recommendation on how to reduce the California Student Opportunity and Access Program (Cal-SOAP) by \$2.2 million, as outlined in the final State Budget. Cal-SOAP is a pre-college program that provides tutoring services, college access and financial aid information to seventh through 12th graders in middle and high schools throughout California.

While the decision was a difficult one for the commissioners to make, Commission staff worked over the last several weeks with program project directors and interested parties to come up with funding formulas and program reductions that were as fair and as balanced as possible. The new \$6.3 million program budget maintains all 15 existing regional programs, which have been reduced in funding by 10 to 25 percent, depending on the size of the program.

Funds were also allocated to continue Cal-SOAP efforts in the greater Solano area. Due to fiscal and administrative issues, Solano County lost its previous program operator earlier this summer.

To learn more about this funding decision, please see option 2 at the following link:
www.csac.ca.gov/comm/comm/092507/meetingnotice.pdf.

Talk with us- The Commission appreciates any comments or feedback you may have regarding the *Fast Blast*. Please forward your comments to fastblast@csac.ca.gov. If this message reaches school staff who are not currently on the Commission's ListServ and wish to be added, they can log on to www.csac.ca.gov and click on links and CSAC list Services.

